

USTLG: Understanding postgraduate STEM users – 30th November 2017

Responses received to questions posed at the USTLG Autumn 2017 meeting held at Cranfield University.

What do we know about this group we refer to often somewhat casually refer to as “researchers”?

- They are anyone who does research!
- They are not one thing – talk to the individuals. Anybody who searches is a researcher – anybody who wants to know is a researcher
- Need to remember that we also have research active faculty staff – how do we keep them up-to-date? Using university repository to raise awareness of library
- They are a diverse bunch and often liked to be treated as individuals
- Not a lot! They are not a homogenous group of people. Some need to find out things rather than just assume stuff

Can we talk about a “research student” experience or are there a range of experiences depending on discipline or whether the student is part-time or full time?

- Range: we have PhD and DProf = different (Middlesex Uni)
- There are generic research and discipline specific research skills
- Huge range – we also have many researchers off-campus (distance)
- Diverse
- Not just in UK – some based overseas
- Immense range – individuals, subjects, home/work balance, existing education experience, cultural differences, etc.
- Many of our PhD students are also members of staff – even programme leaders

How can we better understand the needs of research students, and how do they change during the course of a research programme?

- Talk to them; study with them
- Survey them
- We mapped the research journey with focus groups
- Through a centralised programme
- Attend research panel meetings and PGR conferences & poster sessions
- Ask them! Check in throughout course. Listen to complaints as well as compliments

We know the Libraries make important contributions to the student experience – but how do we know, especially with research students, what those critical intervention points are?

- Talk to them. Map their journey
- Talk to research admin about the curriculum and other training
- Mapped journey and tried to adapt when/how offered support
- Qualitative interviews
- Talk to supervisors – need to win them over
- Difficult as depends on individual but being in time with stressed students could help!

How can we communicate and engage with research students throughout their programme?

- Use their space
- Leave the library
- Talk to them - have coffee with them
- Talk to them in an informal setting or in the break during your training session
- Email research bites, one-to-one's
- Collaborate with departments
- We run Shut Up and Write sessions and coffee mornings in our PGR space to get to know our PhD students
- We have monthly meetings with PhDs to offer bite-size sessions
- Embedding sessions in their research programme. We have a set of training sessions in PhD first year and a couple in the second year
- Be visible where they are
- Be in their spaces

Do you or would you use peer assessment in your lessons?

- Yes – works really well. Engineering education is moving to this too
- Would do
- Have done – to advertise resource – group presentations – peer assessment in library
- Would love to – if I had the time. Intrigued by the VLE though!
- Would love to x 2!
- Yes, with Forensic Science undergraduates – 1st year

Do you measure the impact of your information literacy teaching?

- Yes x 2
- Only by asking question in satisfaction survey 'What is the one thing you have learnt today?'
- Questionnaire at the end of teaching
- Survey students; monitor results; gather feedback from academic staff
- I think we measure the usefulness of the IL session rather than the impact
- Feedback survey – but how to get qualitative feedback

- Not formally – but am lucky to be somewhere very small with personal relationship and thus insight
- Quick feedback at end of session (not large groups) with a scale of satisfaction and comments if time permitted

How many of your projects are driven by customer research?

- All I hope x 3
- I use feedback to constantly assess needs of IL training
- Increasingly – but can be hard to find the time to analyse the existing data and/or do research
- Hopefully all! Recent review of stock after user feedback
- We run student focus groups as part of consultation during projects